
THE RESPONSIBLE SPORTS PARENT 1

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD'S COACH – with the permission of your child!

Parental support has been proven to be a major factor in long-term participation and excellence in youth sport. Without parental support young athletes in many instances would not be able to afford the correct equipment, get safely to and from training and matches and have the emotional support necessary to deal effectively with the pressures sometimes found in the sports arena. In most instances parental support is a positive element in a young person's sporting life, but in some instances a parent's involvement for many reasons has had the opposite effect.

How many times have you been watching your child's team play a match, only to see your son or daughter on the bench for the majority or all of the game? If you have then you have probably been faced with the prospect of talking to the coach – and in many instances running the risk of making things worse – not better.

How does a parent approach a tense situation with their child's coach?

- 1. Talk to your child** – Check there is a problem before approaching the coach
- 2. Create a positive setting**
Find or create a setting that's hassle free, calm and quiet. Immediately after a match isn't the time, the coach has many things to consider and listening to a parent isn't their major priority, the welfare of their athletes should be.
A more positive setting should ensure the coach is more receptive to what your concerns are, with face-to-face conversation and plenty of eye contact.
- 3. Active Listening**
Too often, coaches are braced for a flood of complaints from a parent who comes to talk. **FIGHT YOUR IMPULSE TO UNLOAD!** Introduce your concerns briefly and then sit back and listen to the response – without interrupting. You are more likely to receive a positive response from the coach if they feel respected rather than attacked.
- 4. Be assertive – NOT aggressive**
Don't lead with personal attacks, exaggerations and pre-judgements such as "You told my child they would be starting up front" etc. You are trying to invite problem solving and empathy rather than debate and rebuttal. Focus on the problem, not the person.
Describe the situation in non-judgmental terms
Explain how it affects your child
State a preference on how it should be resolved.
- 5. Be Flexible**
Usually we think we have the solution all figured out before we know enough about the problem. Accept there are many ways to solve the problem, then generate as many as possible that combine the coach's interests and your own. Build a strong, positive relationship with the coach for your child.